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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at
TURNERS-HALL,
The 5th. of MAY, 1700.

By GEORGE KEITH.

In which he gave an Account of his joyning in Communion with the Church of England.

With some Additions and Enlargements made by Himself.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N :

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I P E T E R iii. 16.

Having a good Conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse our good Conversation in Christ.

THE last Lord's Day I made the former Verse of this Chapter the Subject of what I then said in this Place, which I shall not repeat: only let me put you in mind, that I told you who were then present, That it was the Duty of every one who professeth himself to be a Christian, to be ready to give to every Man that asketh him, a Reason of the Hope that is in him. Under which Term [*Hope*] by a *Synecdoche* of a part for the whole, is comprehended and understood our whole Faith and Religion, and all our religious Actions and Performances; for all which, as we ought to be able to give a Reason or Ground why we so believe, hope, act, and why we so profess, to our own Hearts and Consciences; so we ought also to be able and ready to give the like Reason or Ground of the same to others that ask it of us, (which yet suffers some Limitation that I shall not now repeat) to the end, that by the same, they may be convinced to embrace the same way with us, as God is pleased to make us instrumental, by the Operation of his Holy Spirit, to produce that effect, or at least to put to silence their unjust Clamours against us.

But the chief thing is, with good Reason, to be persuaded in our own Consciences, that what we so believe, hope, or act, is true and right, is approved in the sight of God; and in that we shall have Peace.

In the opening of the Words of this 16th Verse, I purpose to answer these three Questions; I. What Conscience is. II. What a good Conscience is, and how a good Conscience is distinguished from an evil Conscience. III. What the Rule of a good Conscience is, according to which it ought to be directed and guided.

To the first, I answer; Conscience is that Power or Faculty of our reasonable Soul or Mind, that can and doth reflect on our Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, both present and past, so as to judge and determine concerning them, whether they be really or apparently right or wrong, good or evil, justifiable or reproveable. Hence; *Rom. 2. 15.*
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the Conscience of the Heathen, or Gentiles, is said *to bear witness, and their thoughts the mean while to accuse or excuse one another.*

To the second, I answer; There are several things altogether necessary to denominate a Man's Conscience to be good.

1. It must be an enlightned Conscience, with a good measure of true Knowledge, whereby to know what is right and good, or wrong and evil. An ignorant Conscience cannot be good.

2. The Obedience of the Heart and Will of Man to what he is convinc'd of his Duty either to be believ'd or practis'd, is necessary to denominate the Conscience to be a good Conscience: for though true Conviction and Knowledge are necessary, yet that alone, without Obedience, is not sufficient to denominate the Conscience to be good; even though the Knowledge and Conviction come from the Spirit of God, there must be a Consent and Harmony betwixt the Understanding and the Will to constitute and denominate the Conscience to be good.

3. The Conscience that is purged and justified by the Blood of Christ, even the Blood of his Cross, that was outwardly shed, *through Faith in that Blood, Rom. 3. 25.* and where the Heart and Conscience, and whole Soul and Body, is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and the inward-work of Regeneration is known by the Spirit of God, the Conscience only of such a Man is a good Conscience; I say, that the Conscience must be purged by the Blood of Christ, that it may be good. See *Heb. 9. 13, 14.* *For if the blood of Bulls and of Goats, and the ashes of an Heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without Spot to God, purge your Conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.* And the Faith which is in the Blood of Christ, *Rom. 3. 25.* is wrought in us, and generally in all who have it, by means of the *written Word*; that is to say, by the Doctrine of Christ crucified, and the spiritual Blessings we have by him, as it is preached to us; for, as the Scripture saith, *Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word, and that Word is the outward Word, as it is in the mouth of the Preachers;* as it followeth in *Rom. 10. 14.* *And how shall they hear without a Preacher, and how shall they preach unless they be sent?* Hence the Word, even the doctrinal Word, is called *the incorruptible Seed, of which true Believers are regenerated and born again,* according to *1 Pet. 1. 23.* And Christ, in the Parable, compar'd his Preaching to the People *to the Husbandman that soweth his seed in the several sorts of ground, Matth. 13. 3.*

* Among the Quakers.

There are a great * many, who think they have a good Conscience, but they have no need of *this Blood of Christ,*

nor

nor of Faith in it; they will have the *Object of their Faith only within them*; they find no need of having the Conscience sprinkled by the Blood of Christ without them; nay, they argue against it, as an impossible Notion, not considering that this Sprinkling is *spiritually by Faith, and not by any material Application*. Also they have a wrong Notion of Faith; they think they have no need of the *written Word*, or any *outward Means* or *Helps*, to have this Faith wrought in them: *The Spirit or Light within, alone, doth all; the Light within them is sufficient to Salvation, without any thing else; the Light within them is whole Christ, God and Man, Flesh, and Spirit, and Bone*. They need no Christ without them, nor no written Word without them; they can Preach, Pray, Believe, without Book, without all outward Helps; *they need no Crutches*, as some argue against *Forms of Prayer*, and call them *Crutches* to lame Persons, which whole and sound Men need not. So others make no more of the *written Word*, the whole Doctrine of the Gospel, as outwardly delivered us in the Holy Scriptures, *but as Crutches which they have no need of at all*.

They will not allow of any written Word at all, or any outward Word; they ask where we find a written Word in Scripture? I tell them, I find it in *John 15. 25.* where Christ calleth a short Sentence that he quoted out of a Psalm of David, ὁ λόγος ὁ γινόμενός, i. e. *that written Word*. They say, they call the Scripture what it calleth it self, to wit, a Treatise; for which they quote *Acts 1. 1. the former Treatise*; but had they understood or consulted the *Greek*, they would have found it, τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, i. e. *the former Word*, whereby he understands the whole Book of the Gospel according to *St. Luke*.

Now as to the distinction betwixt a good and evil Conscience, of which also the Scripture speaks. 1. An evil Conscience is an ignorant Conscience. 2. Unfaithfulness, and Disobedience to what a Man is convinced of, renders the Conscience to be evil. 3. Unbelief, and want of Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, makes the Conscience evil. 4. Not to follow the dictates of Conscience, even when it errs, is an evidence of an evil Conscience. Here that *Axiom* takes place, *Conscientia errans ligat sed non obligat*, an erring Conscience ties but doth not oblige; it is a great pinch and strait: He that follows not an erring Conscience sinneth, because he acts not in Faith, and *what is not of faith is sin*; and when he followeth his erring Conscience he sinneth. This is no new Doctrine, however possibly it may so seem to some here; it is that which every Casuist doth commonly teach: I will illustrate it to you by a Similitude that some have given. If a Subject be deceived by a counterfeit Messenger from his Prince, who brings

brings a counterfeit Message from the King, sealed with a counterfeit Seal, and he thinks it to be real, this Subject sufficiently shews his disrespect and disloyalty to his Prince, if he refuse to obey it; the application is easie. If any object, that as Contradictories cannot be both true or both false, but the one true and the other false; so, if to follow an erring Conscience be a sin, not to follow it is no sin, being Contradictory: But I answer, they are not Contradictory, for they are both affirmative Propositions: *He that followeth an erring Conscience sinneth*, this is affirmative; *He that followeth not an erring Conscience sinneth*, this is also affirmative. But the way to get out of this pinch, is to get a well-informed Conscience, and to get rid of those Errours of Conscience, which prejudice of Education by evil Teachers has led them into; read the Holy Scriptures, search, meditate, pray God to give you a good Understanding, and let you see your Errours; confer with such whom you have good cause to esteem both more holy and more wise and understanding than your selves.

To the third and last, what the Rule of Conscience is, according to which it must be directed and guided, that so it may be denominated a good Conscience.

I answer: We must distinguish betwixt an inadequate or incomplete Rule of Conscience, and that which is adequate and complete. The Law writ in the Heart of every Man, is an incomplete Rule to a Man's Conscience, obliging every Christian to obey it, so that whosoever transgresseth against it, is guilty of hainous sin; and this Law extendeth in some degree to most of all, yea in some sort to all the ten Precepts of the Moral Law; but our highest Obedience to that Law and Rule, cannot denominate the Conscience good, or give true peace of Conscience, or heal the wound of it that sin hath given; *for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God; and whatsoever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God.* The best of our Obedience cannot make atonement for our sins; nay, not for one sin, not the least sin; it is only the Lamb of God, *as he was slain for us, that takes away our sins, as we have faith in him, his Blood cleanseth us from all sin;* and the Merit and Value of it hath procured to us the Gift of the Holy Spirit, to sanctifie us; and therefore we owe both our Justification and Sanctification to the Lamb of God, and to his most precious Blood; for by our Justification we are cleansed from the guilt of sin, and by our Sanctification from the filth of it.

And though Faith and Repentance are necessary conditions and qualifications to our obtaining Remission of sin, Justification and eternal Sal-

Salvation, yet they are not in any wise the meritorious Cause thereof, but Christ alone, by what he hath done and suffered for us. Holiness, and our Obedience to God's Laws and Precepts, both as writ without in the Holy Scriptures, and as writ within in our Hearts, is indispensibly necessary to our eternal Salvation; but we must not rest nor rely upon it, even when it is wrought in us by the help of the Holy Spirit; it must not be the foundation or ground of our Faith, and hope for remission of Sins, and eternal Salvation, either in whole or in part; but our reliance must be alone on the Lord Jesus Christ, both God and Man, as he died for us, &c. and on the Mercy of God through him, apprehended by Faith.

Now the knowledge of this in God's ordinary way is given to us, and all who have it, by the inward Illumination and Operation of the Holy Spirit, in the use of the written Word, as it is preached and heard by us, or read and meditated upon, *We feeling the working of the Spirit of Christ, to mortifie the works of the flesh, and the earthly members, and to draw up our mind to high and heavenly things*; as the 17th Article of the Church of England plainly expresseth.

The complete and adequate Rule therefore of our Faith and Practice is the whole revealed Will of God, as it is declared unto us in the Holy Scriptures; the Laws and Precepts whereof are of a far greater extent than those writ in every Man's heart, without all Scripture-Revelation, or antecedent to it: as David said, *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy Commandment is exceeding broad*; that is, the whole complex or body of the Divine Laws given us by God and Christ, as they are contained in the Holy Scriptures, for Doctrine, for Correction, for Instruction, &c.

It is therefore a great and dangerous Error in them who hold (as many do in these Nations) that the Light within, and what it dictates in every Man, is the full and entire, complete and perfect Rule of all Faith and Practice; and nothing is absolutely needful to our Salvation, but what that Light within teacheth us and all Mankind, or will teach us if we hearken to it, and obey it, without all Scripture, and all outward means of Instruction; and yet the utmost extent that this Light within goeth to teach Men without Scripture, and without the special Illumination and Operation of the Spirit accompanying the Scripture's Testimony, is no more than the Righteousness of the Moral Law, and Terms of the first Covenant, *Do and Live*: which Covenant we have all transgressed, and therefore cannot be saved by the Terms of it. But God in his great Mercy has given us a better Covenant, the Covenant of Grace and Peace, in and through the Knowledge and Faith of Jesus Christ, as he is the Word made Flesh, or God incarnate, the Terms of

which are gentle and easie, and full of Consolation, God thereby declaring that he will pardon the Sins of all that sincerely repent, and truly believe the Gospel of Christ, and sincerely resolve and endeavour to keep his Commands, and give to them eternal Life; the which Terms God has graciously promised to help every one of us to perform, by the Offer and Gift of his Holy Spirit, as it accompanies the preaching of the Gospel.

But these new Terms of the Covenant of Grace, the Light, as it is an universal Principle in all Men, by whatsoever Name they will call it, or whatsoever Worth they will ascribe to it, both Scripture and common Experience doth tell us, doth not teach them. *He sheweth his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any Nation; and as for his Judgments, they have not known them, Psal. 147. 19, 20.*

The Jews had this Advantage over the Heathen World, that *unto them were committed the Oracles of God, Rom. 3. 2. the exceeding great and precious Promises, 2 Pet. 1. 4.* which the Heathen World, to whom the Gospel was not preach'd, had not: and we have that Advantage now that the Jews then had. But the Gentiles being without the Gospel, are said to be *without God and Christ in the World, Ephes. 2. 12. i. e.* without an Interest in God and Christ, and without Hope; Aliens and Strangers to the Commonwealth of *Israel*: The highest Acts of Obedience to *any Light within* us, without the Gospel, and without Faith in Christ crucified and rais'd again, do not denominate us the Children of God, nor prove us to have any just Title or Claim to the eternal Inheritance; for whosoever are the Children of God, they are so *by Faith in Jesus Christ*, as the Scripture expressly declareth, *Gal. 3. 26.* And the Gospel requireth, that to obtain Salvation, we must confess with our Mouths, and believe with our Hearts, that God hath rais'd Christ from the dead, *Rom. 10. 8, 9.* even him who died for our Sins, who was delivered for our Offences, and rose again for our Justification. But *the Light within*, as it is an universal Principle, teacheth not Men these things, these great Mysteries of our Salvation, these lively Oracles, these great and precious Promises, nor these great Fundamentals of the Christian Religion, such as the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, the perfect Atonement and Satisfaction that Christ hath made to the divine Justice and Law for our Sins by his bloody Passion and Death, his Ascension, and Exaltation, and Mediation for us at the right hand of God in the glorified Nature of Man, consisting of a glorified Soul and Body, and that he is to be the Judge of the Quick and the Dead. Also there are divers positive Laws and Precepts of the Gospel, that *the Light within*, as it is an universal Principle, teacheth.

teacheth us nothing of: The Knowledge and Faith of all these things are given us by the written Word preached and read outwardly, and by the special Illumination of the Holy Spirit inwardly working in us a firm Persuasion and Faith of them, giving us a savoury understanding and relish of them, and great Joy and Consolation through hope by the Knowledge and Faith of them.

It proceeds from great Ignorance and Errour in many, that they will not allow any real distinction betwixt the *common Illumination* given to all Mankind, and the *special Illumination* given to Believers in the crucified Jesus: Some will allow a distinction in *degree*, but not in *kind* or *specie*; but, I say, they differ in *kind* or *specie*, (though both come from one and the same Fountain, the Father of Lights, from whom all good Gifts flow, both natural, and spiritual, and supernatural) because they discover differing Objects, *i. e.* differing Truths, by way of Object, that differ from these few Truths discovered by the common Illumination, specifically or in kind; for whatever Truth or Truths the common Illumination discovers to Heathens of the Being, and Power, and Providence of God, *as Creator*, and the Duty of Mankind to him as such, the holy Scriptures without, and the special Illumination of the holy Spirit within, discovers far other and greater Mysteries of Truth, in the inestimable Love of God by the Redemption of the World through Jesus Christ, and the Duty that we owe to God and Christ thereby, in the Belief of his Word and Promises, the Obedience to his Commands, and especially all and every of them given under the New Testament, as that of Baptism and the Supper, Obedience and Subjection to Christ's Government and Discipline he has established in his Church, and to all whom he has set up to have the Rule over us, in his House and Church.

But whereas they plead for the Sufficiency of the *Light within*, and *its Dictates*, without the means of Scripture, and all outward teaching, to qualifie Men to be Christians and Saints, and Heirs of eternal Salvation, from *Jerem. 31. 33.* where God promised to put his Law in the inward parts, making the Law writ or put in the heart, *Jerem. 31. 33.* to be the same, and of the same extent, and the same manner of heart, and manner of writing, with that in *Rom. 2. 15.* This is a miserable Mistake, and a very gross and mischievous Errour. That in *Jerem. 31. 33.* respects the People and Church of God; but that in *Rom. 2. 15.* respects the Heathen World.

The Law writ in the hearts of the Heathen World, teaching the moral Duties of Temperance, Justice, and general Piety towards God as Creator, is, I grant, without the means or help of Scripture, and

antecedent to it; but so is not the Law or Laws of God writ in the hearts of Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who believe in the crucified Jesus, peculiar to the Christian Dispensation, as Obedience to the Faith of the Gospel, and to the positive Ordinances and Institutions of Christ, of Baptism and the Supper, and others aforesaid; these Laws are not writ in our hearts without Scripture, nor antecedent to Scripture, but posterior to Scripture, and by means of Scripture. These positive and peculiar Laws of the Gospel, writ in the hearts of true Believers, and deeply printed and engraven in them, are no other than the Copy or Transcript of the Laws outwardly writ or printed in the holy Scriptures, which come to be transcribed into our hearts by what we daily and frequently hear preached to us, and read out of the holy Scriptures; and what we read our selves out of them, the Spirit of God working with our Industry and Labour, in our hearing, and reading, and well pondering and meditating what we hear or read, causing it to take deep and living Impression on our hearts, and making our hearts that were stony before, now to be soft and tender to receive that Impression, and yet so solid, firm, and tenacious as to retain it, being as a Nail fixt in a firm place by the Masters of Assemblies, given by one Shepherd, *Eccles. 12. 11.* But so is not the heart of Unbelievers or Heathen Gentiles, whose heart is a heart of stone; but the heart of every sincere Believer is a heart of flesh, according to *Ezek. 11. 19.* and *36. 26, 27.* compared with *2 Cor. 3. 3.* But, say some, cannot the Spirit teach us without Book, even without the Scripture? Thus some argue for the sufficiency of *the Light within*, without any thing else. I answer; and so can an able Schoolmaster teach his Scholars without Book, but they cannot well learn without Book. As the Master condescendeth to the weak capacity of his Scholars to teach them by Books, so doth the Spirit condescend to our weak capacity, to teach us by the written Word.

Now as concerning the peculiar positive Laws of the Gospel under the New Testament, and the Gospel Precepts, some of them are greater, and some lesser, but all highly valuable and profitable. The greater are such, that Obedience to them is of absolute and indispensable necessity to our Salvation; as, to believe in Christ, and to love Christ, and to rejoyce in Christ, whom yet we have neither outwardly heard nor seen, according to *1 Pet. 1. 8.* and *John 20. 29. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* The lesser are such that are not of that absolute and indispensable necessity to Salvation in some cases, thought still generally necessary to Salvation; as, Water-baptism and the Lord's Supper. It would be too uncharitable in us,

to conclude that all who die without them, fall short of Salvation. Christ said, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*: but he said not, he that is not baptized shall be damned, but, he that believeth not shall be damned. Our most merciful and gracious Lord knew well, that by some unavoidable Providences some could neither receive Baptism nor the Supper, how much soever they desired it, being prevented by Death, before they could have them administered to them: in which case all good Casuists and Divines say *Votum Baptismi*, i. e. The Desire of Baptism, and the Willingness of the Mind to subject to it as the Ordinance of Christ, is equivalent to Baptism it self: And the like may be said of the Lord's Supper.

But what shall we say or think of many in our day and time, who may have it, and yet through woful Ignorance and Errour, being deluded by false Teachers, and prejudice of Education, or otherwise darkened and blinded in their Minds, refuse and reject it; not only break these two precious Commands of Christ, but teach Men so to do: And many have lived and died in this opposition to these Precepts of Christ, without any sign of Repentance, being taught by their false Teachers to believe that they are no Commands of Christ. I own, to my Grief and Shame, that I have been so deceived by them; and I thank my gracious God that has spared and prolonged my natural Life until he was pleased to farther enlighten me, and give me to see my great Errour, and renounce it, as I have done, and now to practise that which I formerly rejected. But to answer directly to the Question, what other or better Answer can I give than the words of our Saviour himself, *Mat. 5. 19. Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven*. Some understand it so, that he shall have no place in the Kingdom of Heaven; which is true, if he live and die in wilful Ignorance and Disobedience: but I will not be so uncharitable, as to think so, of many who have in some measure in Faithfulness held the Fundamentals of Christianity, and have sincerely endeavoured to obey such of the greater Commands of Christ, that they are perished; but, on the contrary, I have the charity to them, and so I hope and desire that ye may have the same, that God has in mercy received them, and has not excluded them from the Kingdom of Heaven, notwithstanding they have lived and died not only in the disuse of some of Christ's Commands, such as Baptism and the Supper, but have even continued in the opposition of them to the last moment, not through any wilful Ignorance, but by being imposed upon by the high Pretences of their false Teachers, whom they esteemed to be Prophets: Yet I think, without
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breach of charity, I may say, that for their Ignorance, and ignorant opposition to these or any of the least of Christ's Commands, they shall have a lesser degree of Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven than otherwise they should have had.

I have now done with what I had to say in answer to these weighty Questions: I shall only observe one Particular from the words of the Text, which is this.

That it hath oft been, and is the Lot of good Men, having a good Conscience, to be wrongfully judged, misrepresented, and falsely accused, both Scripture and History abounds with Examples to prove this: as in the case of *Joseph, Moses, David, and Daniel*, and many of the Prophets; and in the case of *John Baptist*, and our Saviour; *John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said he had a Devil; Christ came eating and drinking with Publicans and Sinners, and they called him gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber*: to which my Case somewhat resembles. These four Years past, my Adversaries among the *Quakers* reproached me, that I was of no Communion, neither *Quaker* nor *Presbyterian*, nor *Independent* nor *Baptist*, nor of the *Church of England*; and unless I would declare my self to be of some particular Communion, they would not dispute with me, nor regard me, to answer me; though I told them I was a Christian, and a Member of the Catholick Church of Christ, and have great charity for all the sincere that hold the Head in all the several Communions of Protestants: but this would not satisfy, but they would insult, and sought to trample me under their feet, but God supported me.

But now again, when with a good Conscience, being farther (I bless God) enlightned, and my Scruples I had being fairly removed, after diligent Examination and mature Deliberation I have declared my self to be for the *Church of England*, and have joyn'd in Communion with her, they do as much reproach and revile me, and falsely accuse me, as formerly; and so would they have done if I had joyned with any of the *Dissenters*: but, I bless God, I have a good Conscience, and my care hath been, is, and I hope ever shall be, to have Peace with God, and my own Conscience; and therefore I need not be much concerned what my Adversaries, or any other ignorant persons, shall say of me. I am comforted with the words of our Blessed Lord to his Disciples, *Matth. 5. 11. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.* This (I thank God) is my case: I charge my Adversaries to prove any thing against me of evil Conversation. I have with Zeal and Resolution, which God hath been pleas'd to give me, and who has
greatly

greatly supported and strengthened me, opposed and testified against their vile Errours; and this is all the cause of their Hatred against me, and that God has been pleased to bless and prosper my mean Labours with some Success; so that both in *America* many, and here in *England*, both in City and Country, divers have come from Quakerism and gone over to the Church of *England* with me; yea, divers have prevented me, and gone before me; and divers here, I hope, will go along with me. I also remember what Christ said, *John 16. 2. The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service.* Persecutors commonly follow an erring Conscience; few Persecutors; and be sure they are of the worst sort that knowingly and wilfully persecute the Servants of God.

Having thus far proceeded, according to the Doctrine I mentioned at the beginning of this Discourse, on the foregoing Verse, *1 Pet. 3. 15.* I think it my Duty, and a weighty Concern lyeth upon me, to give to this Auditory the Reason of the Hope that is in me, of my Faith and Persuasion in this very particular, Why I have joined in Communion with the Church of *England*, although I retain Charity to all the honest-hearted of other Communions, hoping that in God's due time, the more Sincere will follow my Example; and that God will make all the Sincere, to be not only of one Faith, (as many at present are) but of one Way and Practice, and Uniformity, Worship, and Church Discipline, so as with one mouth, and one heart and mind, to glorifie God, *Rom. 15. 16.* This will be a Joyful Day, which I hope many here, and elsewhere, pray for. Why then will ye not help it forward by your good Examples, laying aside all weak and insufficient Scruples, which upon due Examination, will be found without just ground? And why find ye fault with those that begin to give you good Example? Though this Change of mine is not so great as some imagine, I was never so uncharitable as I find some are; though I grant, I have been too uncharitable, which I have retracted: I have been for a considerable time very charitable to all sober and religious Protestants of all sorts, and have oft in secret, bewail'd their Opposition one to another, perceiving that in great part it came more from Prejudice of Judgment and Education than any just Cause. I date not my Conversion to Christianity from this Change, nay, nor from my first turning to the Quakers. My gracious God began early to deal with me, and turn'd my Heart towards him. I was well instituted in the Fundamentals of Christianity, by the good Education I had, (for which I praise God,) before I knew the Quakers; and though in too many things I was misled by them, being deceived by their high pretences to Perfection,

on, and divine Enjoyments, by which they have deceived many as well as me, yet I retained a sound Faith of the Fundamentals of Christianity, and did constantly profess the same, which I can sufficiently prove both by my printed Books from time to time, and divers Manuscripts; and from my Childhood to this day, God has in mercy preserved me from all scandalous Conversation and Practice; whereof some of good Credit are ready to give a Testimony, who have known me for Forty six Years past, and my manner of Conversation.

I am the more concerned to give the reason of my said Change, chiefly for the sake of some of my good Friends here present, who though by the Blessing of God have been by me, as an instrument, brought off from the Quakers Errours, that were opposite to the Fundamentals of Christianity, yet have some remaining Scruples that at present hinder them from so cordial a joining with the Church of *England*, and seem to be concerned with my joining with her, which I hope God in due time will remove; and so far as is possible for me, I will endeavour, as his instrument, to be assisting to them; as also for the more confirming of such who are cordially ready to join with me: And in the next place, to silence the unjust Clamours, and false Accusations of my professed Adversaries, and others ignorantly prejudiced against me, I am desirous to let them know that I have good reason for what I have done, and have acted as a rational Christian Man in my so doing.

A chief Reason therefore which I offer is this: Suppose there were a parity or equality in all other respects betwixt the Dissenters and the Church of *England*, I mean the more sound and orthodox among them, as in Doctrine and Worship, Sacraments and Church-Government, Discipline and Constitution of Members; yet this with me doth cast the Balance, and I think ought to cast the Balance with any rational considerate person, that on that supposition, the minority or lesser number should yield to the majority or greater number, and the younger should yield to the elder, and the Daughters to the Mother. For, certain it is, that the Church of *England*, as she was in King *Edward VI.* and Queen *Elizabeth's* time, and in Queen *Mary's* time, was the *Mother Protestant Church*. The Dissenters Forefathers had their Christianity, Baptism, and Christian Education and Profession in her Communion, and were nursed as it were in her Arms, and suckled at her Breasts; and the more sober of all Dissenters will say, she was a true Church then, in all the main things of Religion. Now unless they can prove that she is changed from what she then was, either in Doctrine, or Sacraments, or Worship, or Discipline, or Church-Government, in any material thing, from better to worse, which I think they cannot do, how can they justify their Separation from her? And

And I think I may safely add, that the wiser Men and ablest in solid Learning and Piety, and in the sound Knowledge of the Scriptures to instruct the Ignorant, and convince or put to silence Opposers, to refute Antichristian and Popish Errors as well as all other old and late Heresies are much more numerous to be found in the Church of *England*. And what solid Learning the ablest of the Dissenters have had, so far as may be acquired by outward means, has been originally by means of Church of *England* Men. She hath been all along, and still is the greatest Bulwark against Popery (whereof she hath given sufficient Proof from time to time, witness the many elaborate and excellent Books and Tracts written by her Members) against Popery especially, and other old and new Heresies, as Deism, Atheism, &c. yea, let the Libraries and Closets of the generality of the Dissenters Ministers be searched, who are the more knowing and judicious, and of best repute among them, either for Piety or Learning, and it will be found, that they have more Books of Church of *England* Divines, and other forraign Divines who own Communion with her, than of any others? And yet for all this shall I be so uncharitably judged, and my Friends who go along with me, as a sort of Apostates, and as having bad Ends and Designs, and as some of them (I hear) suggest against me, that I do it for a Living, I pray God forgive their uncharitable Judgment, I neither was nor yet am so hard put to it for a worldly Living, as some imagine, and as others wish and desire, I mean of my Adversaries among the *Quakers*, who have Prophecied of my outward as well as inward Ruine, and longed to have their false Prophecies accomplished against me; but God hath hitherto disappointed them, and preserved me and mine from Ruine both inwardly and outwardly, for which I bless his Name, and I hope he will preserve me to the End. Why should the Expectation of a Living incline me more to the Church of *England*, than to the Dissenters? Had I joyned with them, I might have got a Living among them; perhaps more plentiful by the Peoples *Gratuities*, than by a *Set maintenance* in the Church of *England*.

Which last way of living I think is the more Honourable; and less obnoxious to many great Temptations; and every way as suitable to the Gospel.

I find that the Church of God in Scripture is compared to an Army, whose Captain is our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, called the Captain of our Salvation. Now suppose there were two Armies in the Field, the one very great and numerous, the other far less in Number, as suppose the one Thirty thousand, the other Ten, pray tell me, whether it is not more safe for us all, who are concerned in one common Cause

against the common Enemy, to keep within the Body of the Army, then in several Parties to straggle and keep asunder from it, or Entrench by themselves: The like is our present Case, both the Church of *England*, and all called *Protestant Dissenters*, profess to be concerned in one common Cause against *Papists*, *Turks* and *Jews*, *Deists* and *Atheists*, and others guilty of vile *Heresies* in a Spiritual Warfare. Is it not therefore more prudent and safe, to unite together in one Body of Christian Society and Communion against the common Enemy, that we may be the stronger; especially seeing the differences betwixt the Church of *England* and the more judicious and moderate of the *Dissenters*, are not in any Materials either of Doctrine or Worship, but the very same, as they have Confessed? Have not these Divisions and Separations had bad Effects, weakened the Protestant Interest, strengthened the *Papists*, yea, and *Deists*, and *Atheists*, and loose and scandalous Persons, who take occasion to say, there is no true Religion on either side, by observing the great Heats and Animosities, and bitter Prejudices of the differing Parties?

I will now come to answer what I think they will object mainly against my Reason above given: They will tell us, that if the *parity* or *equality* on both Sides were the same, my Reason would be good; but they will alledge there is a great disparity and inequality, the Dissenters have the Advantage, in several Particulars, as 1st. in Doctrines, 2^{dly}. in manner of Worship, 3^{ly}. Administration of the Sacraments, 4^{thly}. Church Governments, which (say the Dissenters) is more agreeable to Scripture among them, than in the Church of *England*. To every one of which I think to say something, as briefly as I can. And First, as to the Doctrine, as touching the Articles of Faith (the Quakers excepted) they Profess to be one with the Church of *England*, and have signed, or profess themselves willing to sign her Articles. Secondly, as to the manner of Worship, which the Dissenters contend for, should be wholly by an *extempore* Gift of Spirit, whereas the Church of *England*, though she alloweth, that Ministers before and after Sermon may Pray (without a Set Form, either read, or repeated from the bare Memory) by using their sanctified Parts, and Gifts of Understanding, to Conceive Prayer by the Help of the Spirit, yet she is not only for the Lawfulness of Set Forms of Prayer, composed by Pious Men of Spiritual Abilities, both ancient and late, but for the great Conveniency and Profitableness of them, yea and Necessity of them in many respects, in the Publick Worship of God, leaving every one to their Christian Freedom, whether to use or not use, Set Forms in their Closet and Private Devotions.

But

But to this I say, The most Pious as well as Judicious, whom the Dissenters esteem so, and repute as their Fathers; and others that repute them not so, yet will allow that they were very holy and spiritual Men, have owned the Lawfulness of Set Forms of Prayer; yea not only the Lawfulness, but the great Convenience and Necessity of them in the Publick Worship of God. *Calvin*, one of the most famous of the Protestant Reformers was for them, as I proved to you some time ago, out of his express words, in his Letter to the Protector of *England*, *Epist.* 87. The Protestant Churches abroad in *Germany*, *Holland*, *Polland*, *Sweden*, *Denmark*, and *France*, from the beginning of the Reformation to this very day, have used Set Forms of Prayer and Thanksgiving in their Publick Worship. And yet I think the Dissenters here will not conclude, that their Worship was wholly carnal dead, and without Life or Spirit, as many of them do now argue against the publick Prayers of the Church of *England*. The Life and Spirituality of Prayer doth not consist in the Mode or Form of the words, whether Set or *Extempore*, say all sound and judicious Christians, but in the Purity, and Fervour of the Affections.

And therefore an *Extempore* Prayer may be very Formal, dead and dry, and a Prayer in a Set Form may be very lively, powerful, and effectual, as the experience of Thousands daily confirm. And suppose the Dissenters would be so uncharitable to judge, that *Calvin's* Prayers at *Geneva* in Set Forms, and *Luther's* in *Wittenberg*, and all the other Protestants Prayers in Set Forms, were barely Formal, Carnal, Dead and Dry, and the blessed Protestants Prayers, who died Martyrs in *Queen Mary's* Reign that used Set Forms, yea many of these now in use (which would be great uncharitableness.) Will they dare to judge so of the publick Prayers of the Church of Christ, that were in Set Forms in the purest Times of Primitive Christianity, from the days of the Apostles, in the Three First Centuries, as is evident from Church History, before Popery was heard of in the World? Or will they be so uncharitable to Censure the publick Prayers of the Jewish Church, in her best and purest Times, who had Set Forms of Worship, both for Prayer and Thanksgiving: And that it was the constant manner of the Jewish

Quod ad formulam precum, &c. As to the Form of Prayers, and Ecclesiastical Rites, [Note] that I greatly approve that it be certain; from which it may not be lawful for Pastors to depart in their Function, both to guard against the Simplicity and Unskilfulness of some, and also, that the Consent of all the Churches among themselves may be more certainly known. And lastly, to Put a Check to the insolent Liberty of some who affect certain Innovations.

So then it behoveth there be a Set [or fixed] Catechism, a Set Administration of Sacraments; also a Set Form of Prayers.

Church, to have a Part of the Publick Worship with the Priests, joining with them in Vocal Prayer with their Mouths and Lips. Both in Prayer and Thanksgiving is clear from many places of Scripture in the Old Testament, where no doubt their Assemblies, both in the Temple, and Synagogues, consisted of a great mixture of good and bad, Sincere and Hypocritical; see *Psal.* 50. 15, 16. This was spoken not to Priests only, but to the People; and *Isai.* 29. 13. where the Lord blam'd not the People simply, for *drawing near to God with their Mouth,* and *honouring him with their Lips*; but that while they did give him that outward Part of Worship, they had removed their *Heart far from him*, and gave him not the internal as well as the external Part of Worship; the internal being as the Soul, and the external as the Body of it. This clearly shews, what the manner of their Publick Worship then was, and that the People that assembled did really Pray Vocally with the Priests; and that they did Offer unto God the Calves of their Lips, according to *Hos.* 14. 2. And in like manner, the Christians in their Assemblies are commanded to Offer up unto God the Fruit of their Lips, *Heb.* 13. 15. and though the Sacrifice of Praise is there only mentioned, yet no doubt Prayer is also understood, and is as real a Duty for the People to practise, as that of Praise; and if People may Sing with the Spirit, and yet use Set Forms, as they do in Singing *David's Psalms* in Publick Congregations all of them, [some Anabaptists excepted] why may they not Pray with the Spirit in Set Forms? If the Set Form quench not the Spirit in Singing, why should it be supposed to do it in Praying?

It is indeed one of the chiefest Reasons that perswade me, that in the Publick Worship of God Set Forms are necessary, because the People ought to have a Part of the external Worship, as well as the internal, by Confessing, Praying, and giving thanks in Common with their Mouths and Lips, as in believing in one Common Faith, with their Hearts, being a holy Priesthood unto God, *1 Pet.* 2. 5.

And whereas they say, the Ministers Mouth when he Prays, is the Peoples Mouth unto God in Publick Prayer.

As this is allowed that sometimes so it is, but to say it is always, and must be always so, is without ground; yea, is hurtful and prejudicial, for so, as God is denied that external Service from the People that is due to him, of Adoration, the People is deprived of that which is their Priviledge and a great Benefit unto them, to speak unto God by themselves, (and not by a Proxy always) when they Pray. And if Prayer with the Mouth be a Duty in Private for all Christian People, it is no less a Duty, or rather much more, in Publick.

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We are Commanded to Confess with the Mouth, as well as Believe with our Heart, to hold fast the Profession of our Faith, the Greek word in both places signifies a joint Confession, *simul dicere*, to say together. How should we know one anothers Faith, that we hold it fast, but by holding fast the Profession of it, in joining together in the Christian Assemblies, Vocally and with word of Mouth, to Confess what we Believe, as we are Commanded, and as with one Mind, so with one Mouth to Glorify God, *Rom. 15. 6.* This one Mind, is the Consent and Harmony of many Minds; and therefore the one Mouth, is not one simple Mouth of the Minister, no more than it is one single Mind of the Minister; but the Consent and Harmony of many Mouths, even of the whole Congregation.

There is a greater Advantage and Benefit in Vocal Prayer by the Organs of Speech, when duly performed both in Private and Publick, than many do well understand, and especially in Publick; both for their own good, and the good of others. Although our Prayers neither Vocal nor Mental, move God properly speaking, yet they move our selves and others; and if the Spirit of God assist in our Vocal Prayers, as we have cause to believe he doth so assist all good Christians, though not in that manner as he did the Prophets, that Motion kindles a Celestial Fire both in our selves, and others that hear us; and if one Mouth so divinely moved kindles a little, many Mouths so moved will kindle a great deal. St. James tells us, the *Tongues of wicked Men are set on the Fire of Hell*; and that *one Tongue is like a little Spark of Fire that kindles a great matter*, James 3. 5. And why may not we as well conclude that the Tongues of Godly Men are enkindled with Fire from Heaven. Yet it stands with good reason, that Holy Angels who are present in the Assemblies of the Faithful, are moved with the Vocal Prayers and Praises of the Faithful in the Church, whereby they know our inward States and Thoughts, as Men know our Thoughts by our Words, when we sincerely express them; for Angels know not our Thoughts immediately, but mediately either by audible words, or by some soft and gentle motion of our bodily Organs of Speech: Also it stands with good reason from Scripture Authority, that our blessed Mediatour Jesus Christ, not as he is God, but as he is Man in our Nature, now in Heaven glorified, is really moved and affected with the Prayers, both Mental and Vocal, of the Faithful, *Heb. 4. 15.* We find in the *Revelations*, that after the four Living Creatures, i. e. the Body of the Church, had sung together their Antheme, the Twenty Four Elders, i. e. the Governours, answered with their Antiphone; and the Angels answered both with theirs, *Rev. 4. 8, 9, 10.* compared with *Rev. 5. from ver. 8.*
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Now if the People in the Publick Worship should have a Part, joining in Vocal Prayer and Thanksgiving with the Minister, and answering him, sometimes by saying *Amen*, sometimes by other fit and suitable words, this must needs be in Set Forms that both are agreed in, and know beforehand, otherwise either the People must be tied to his Form, which however *Extempore* to him, and free, yet to them is a Limitation and Restriction, as much and much less safe, than to be tied to a Form they had formerly known, and been acquainted with, or else we must suppose a Miracle to be wrought every time they Pray Vocally together, If every of them, or any two of them Pray *extempore* in the same Form of words, without receiving it the one from the other.

To plead for using a new Form, or Method of words in Prayer every time that Men Pray, is as improper and impertinent as to plead, that every time we Eat we must have a new Dish or Platter, to Eat out of; and every time we drink, we must have a new Cup to drink out of, and if every day, yea as oft every day as we Pray, we must use a new *extempore* Form, we may as well plead every day, we must several times each day, put on New Shoes, and new Apparel; which as it would be great waste, so would it be very uneasie. The method of words in Prayer, whether *extempore*, or in a Set Form, is as remote an Accident to the substance of Prayer, either for Matter or Life, as a Dish or a Platter is to the Meat put into it, or a Cup to the Drink that is in it; the same Meat may be as good as when put into another Dish, and the Drink as good as in another Cup; and as several Habits of Garments may suit the same Person, so several Forms of Prayer, with respect to the external Form, may suit the same Prayer, both as to Matter and Life. As Grace doth sometimes cause a variety in our words of Prayer, when the Matter is the same, so meer humane Art can, and doth most frequently cause a variety; for by meer humane Art, fix words can be varied some hundreds of times, and yet the matter remain the same: It is therefore a great mistake in many who think, they who pray in greatest variety of words and modes of expression, they Pray most by the Spirit, or with Grace; for as it can be done by meer Art without Grace, so it frequently is so done; and thereby many are greatly deceived, especially when it is Varnished with great seeming shews of Fervour, by gestures and tones, that move and stir the natural and animal Passions and Affections.

But I remember I have heard two or three things objected by some against the matter of Common Prayer. 1. Where the People say, *There is no Health in us*. But that is no more offensive, then what the Scripture saith,

faith, *That it is not in Man to direct his Steps*, i. e. It is not in Man as of himself, but of the Lord, so there is no *health in us*, nor in any Man, but what is of God and Christ : It is not us originally, but by derivation and participation from God and Christ, in whom all fullness dwells, and of whose fullness we all receive, and Grace for Grace. 2. That they still are praying from Seven to Seventy, *Lord be merciful to us miserable Offenders* ; but this I think is only made by the Quakers, all others confess that they are Sinners, and consequently, as in themselves miserable, and continually needing God's mercy ; for as St. James said, *in many things we offend all* ; and as St. John saith, *if we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves* ; but *if we confess our Sins, &c.* The Church of God in all Ages have confessed their Sins ; and the holiest Men have done so, as Daniel, Esdras, &c. The great remission of Sins in the most solemn and publick manner, is reserved to the day of Judgment, that great day of Assise ; what remission the best now have, is but like the Criminal's Pardon from the King, that he has by himself in secret ; that is not so Authentick till it be proclaimed in open Court at the Assise. 3. Some object against that expression in the *Common Prayer*, *We are tied and bound with the Chain of our Sins*. But I think none of the Dissenters (the Quakers excepted) can well so object ; many of whom commonly in their Prayers say, *They must carry about with them a Body of Sin and Death to the Grave* ; which I think is more than what is here objected against. I think it were more safe and warantable according to Scripture to say, that some remainders of Sin remain in the Faithful, especially with respect to the Original Defilement by Adam's Fall, as also with respect to some remaining part of those Habits of Sin we have contracted by our actual Transgressions, than that the Body of Sin remains in them, if they understand it, of the whole Body or Complex of vicious Habits contracted by actual Sins, which the Saints are said to have put off by Regeneration, as, when the Body or Bulk of a great Tree is cut down, with its Boughs, Branches, Twigs and Bearers, yet the Etump and Root, or some part of it remains in the Ground, which if due care be not taken continually to mortify, suppress, and subdue, would spring up again, to which that in *Hebr.* 12. 15. seems plainly to refer, and with respect to such a remaining Part, root or seed of Sin, in the Faithful, it is said by St. John, 1 John 1. 8. *If we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us.* This remainder of Sin God hath seen meet to suffer to remain in the Faithful (though he pardoneth the Guilt of it, and hath promised to give them sufficiency of his Grace, whereby still they may be able to mortify and subdue it) for the tryal of their Faith, and the exercise both of their Faith, and all other their Graces and Virtues,

ties, in the way of Spiritual Conflict and Warfare, against three grand Enemies, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh ; that so through the Victory that the Faithful obtain by the Victorious Power of God's Grace, their Reward may be the greater, (which yet is still the Free Gift of God) according to 2 Tim. 2. 5. *And if a Man also strive for Masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.* Not that Sin either in less or more, is any proper Cause of the increase of our Virtues, yet as in natural Effects one natural Agent commonly works the more powerfully in the presence of a contrary Agent, if that contrary Agent be not too powerful, its Agency serving but to excite the other the more effectually against it ; as Heat is increased by Cold, and a little Water cast into Fire increaseth the Flame. Now that this remaining part, root, or seed of Sin, with what other is contracted by the daily indeliberate, and for the most part, involuntary infirmities that the Faithful are obnoxious to, may be said to be a Chain, whereby they are tied and bound, in part, though as to the main, they are loosed, and set free from the reign and prevalence of Sin, by the virtue and prevalence of God's Grace ; as when a Man that has been bound Hands and Feet, and in his whole Body, by strong Fetters of Iron, is loosed from the greatest and heaviest of them in his whole Body and Members, yet some less Chain or Chains remain, that though they neither do nor can hinder his acting and walking, yet do in part incommode and retard him. This is fitly represented by what is reported of that holy Man *Anselm's* observation of a Shepherd Boy that had tied a small Stone with a small Thred, to the Foot of a small Bird, and then let it out of his hand loose to fly. The small Bird did fly but a little at a time, being incommoded and retarded with the weight of the Stone, though but little, flying a little, and resting a little ; now mounting upwards as if it would fly straightway to Heaven ; but then soon after descending to the Earth ; which that holy Man beholding, made the Embleme of the State of his Soul, and fell into Weeping, saying to this effect, *What the little Stone is to this little Bird, that my Sin that hangs about me is to me.*

To the Third, The Administration of the Sacraments ; wherein do they suppose, that the Dissenters have any advantage above the Church of England ? they will say, that they add nothing to Christ's Institution in Baptism, whereas the Church of England adds the Sign of the Cross, and at the receiving the Lord's Supper they receive it kneeling ; to this I answer, the Church of England makes not the Sign of the Cross, any part of Baptism, for she doth not order it to be used at private Baptism to any that is in danger of Death, nor does she make it any Means of Grace, but a *convenient* Symbole to put us in mind, and also to signify, that we own Christ that was crucified on the Tree of the Cross, and

and are not ashamed to confess him, the Captain of our Salvation, and manfully to fight under his Banner, against Sin, the World, and the Devil, &c. which has but the like Service that a Cross drawn with Ink on Paper, has to signify the Cross of Wood, that he was crucified upon, and is but a sort of Hieroglyphick, neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture, but simply indifferent ; and that our Superiors both Ecclesiastick and Civil, have Authority to command us in the use of indifferent Things, I am well satisfied, and I see not but so ought the Dissenters to acknowledge, who grant that our Superiors both Ecclesiastical and Civil may enjoin the keeping of a Fast Day for publick Calamities, or a Festival Day of Thanksgiving for publick Mercies. *Baxter* makes no more hurt in using the sign of the Cross in Baptism, than if we should tie a piece of Thred to our Finger to keep us in mind of what we desire to remember.

That the Lord's Supper is received kneeling, has no more Ceremony nor hurt in it, than that we pray kneeling, for both the Minister that gives, and the People that receives the Elements of Bread and Wine, do it with Prayer.

For all the great Clamour against the Ceremonies of the Church of *England*, I scarcely find any more but one, that may be so called, to wit, that abovementioned, the sign of the Cross at Baptism, which is a very harmless, and a very ancient Practise in the Church of Christ, and had a warrantable Original, that because the Heathens upbraided the Christians with the Cross, to show, they were not ashamed of it, after receiving Baptism, they received the sign of the Cross on their Foreheads, nor is that occasion wanting in our Day, where so many Thousands here in this Nation, on the pretence of high Divine Inspirations, have cast away the Profession of Faith in Christ, as he was outwardly Crucified, together with the Memorials of him, Baptism, and the Supper.

And as concerning Infant Baptism time will not permit at present, that I should insist on it ; but this I say, I am fully satisfied with the Baptism I had in Infancy, and I do believe that it as duly belongeth to the Infant Children of Believers under the New Testament, being a seal to them of God's Covenant of Grace for remission of Sin, as Circumcision did belong to such under the Old Testament, for God is no less merciful to Believers and their Children now, than he was then.

I cannot but think strange, that there should be such a Clamour against the Ceremonies in the Church of *England*, having upon enquiry, found them so few. I lately met with a Book of one of the Church of *England*, wherein I found him having the same Thought with mine, that there is but one Ceremony in the Church of *England*, viz. the sign

of the Cross, and strictly speaking, I see no need why it should be called a Ceremony, this hard Word offends many ignorant People, why may not our Superiors Ecclesiastick and Civil enjoin some Things that are meerly Circumstantial, and in themselves indifferent, as to the Habit of Minister's Cloathing, and the Use of a Surplice in Divine Service, of the Decency and Conveniency of which they are more proper Judges than private Persons, as well as they are generally allowed to determine other Circumstances of Time and Place, and various Actions, relating to both Religious and Civil Matters. To bury in Woollen, and to lay the dead in a Coffin, to lay a Cloth, or Cushen on the Pulpit, to ring a Bell before Sermon, to have a Clock or Hour-glass before the Minister's Face when he Preacheth, which the *Quakers* cry out against as much as others do against the Surplice, and sign of the Cross, to have a clean Linnen Cloth on the Communion Table, and Silver Platter and Cup, for the distributing the Elements of Bread and Wine at the Lord's Supper, all these and divers other Things the Dissenters commonly allow, as well as the Church of *England*, some of them, by command of Superiors, others of them by Custom, why do they not call them Ceremonies, and fright the People with that hard Word?

Lastly, as to the Government of the Church, the Dissenters are so far from having the Advantage of the Church of *England*, that she hath the Advantage over them, in that as well as in the other Things above-mentioned.

That in all Societies both Civil and Ecclesiastical, there should be an Order and Superiority of Officers, Rulers and Governours, Nature it self teacheth it. How can a City or Nation be ruled and kept in Order, if all the Rulers be equal? How can an Army be governed, or-disciplined, or led forth to Battel without divers Degrees, Superior and Inferior of Military Officers, if all the Captains of each single Company, consisting suppose of one hundred Men each single Company, and the whole Army consisting of many Thousands, if these single Captains had no superior Officers over them, but every one left to his own Discretion, to lead on his Company to Battle against the common Enemy, who has all in good Order, and a due and regular Distinction of superior and inferior Officers, how can it be supposed, but that the Army that has this good Order, and Distinction of various Officers, superior and inferior, should prevail against the other that hath no such Order and Distinction, we may see a wonderful order of Superiority and Inferiority in all Things in the whole visible Creation, in the Heavens and Elements; and that there is the like Superiority in the invisible Creations of Angels and Spirits the Scripture doth plainly inform us,

as Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers, Cherubim and Seraphim ; *Jethro Moses's* Father-in-Law, advised him to set Captains over Tens, over Fifties, over Hundreds, and over Thousands of the People of *Israel*, for the better and easier Government of them, both in War and Peace ; and *Moses* hearkned to his Advice, *Exod.* 18. 24. And we find in Scripture, that the Church is compared to an Army, and the Members thereof to Soldiers ; the chief General and Captain whereof is our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath appointed divers Officers in his Church under the New Testament, distinct not only in degree, but in kind, as Bishops, Presbyters (otherwise called Priests) and Deacons answerable to the three Officers that were in the Church of the Jews under the Old Testament, to wit, the high Priest, Priests and Levites ; and because they were but one Nation, all living within a small Compass of Ground, one High Priest did suffice, according to God's Appointment.

This threefold distinction of Church Government by Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, upon a further search into the New Testament, I find so very clear as doth fully satisfy me, notwithstanding that by prejudice of Education I was formerly Principled against it ; and also by searching into Church-History, and the Writings of the Ancients, nearest to the Apostles Times, and the succeeding Ages, in the purest and best State of the Churches, as well as when there was a great declining from that purity, yet as many other Things both of sound Doctrine, and good practice still remained ; so this distinction of Church Rulers did all along remain, generally in all Places, as well as in all Ages, where God had any Visible Church, or where there was any Society of People, Professing the Christian Religion, until the beginning of the Reformation, where in divers Countries abroad, there was no Protestant Kings, the Protestants set up Churches without Bishops (not rejecting the Office, nor condemning it as unlawful or Antichristian, as some in late Times have done) but excusing the want of it by that general maxim, *Necessity has no Law*. I need not insist to prove the distinction of Presbyters and Deacons out of the New Testament, it being (in some sort) generally acknowledged by the Dissenters. But the Superiority of Bishops over Presbyters, is that which is condemned by some as Antichristian, and by some others judged at best unnecessary, and no part of Christian Discipline, belonging to Christianity either essential or integral. But if you will lay aside all prejudice of Education, and uncharitableness, you will clearly and evidently see it in the Holy Scriptures. That the Apostles had a Superiority over not only the LXX. but all other Ministers and Pastors, or Teachers, is very clear from *1 Cor.* 12. 28. compared with *Eph.* 4. 11.

That Bishops were to succeed the Apostles, and have the like Office both with them, as Churches came to be planted in divers parts of the World before their Decease, and also after their Decease; not with respect to the extraordinary gifts of Prophecy and Miracles, but with respect to the Government of the Church by a regular Succession, is evident from *Mat.* 28. 19, 20. compared with the above-cited *Eph.* 4. 11. otherwise all standing or settled Ministry, as an Ordinance of Christ, may be rejected, as Enthusiasts generally do, yea what can these Governments be, mentioned *1 Cor.* 12. 28. but as really the Superiority of Bishops over Presbyters, as of Presbyters over the Deacons, and the People, otherwise why Governments in the Plural Number? Also what are these Dignities mentioned *Jud.* 8. that some despised in the Apostles days? and *2 Pet.* 2. 10, 11. And how should any doubt of the Office of Episcopacy, being an Ordinance of Christ in the Church, when the qualifications requisite to such an Officer are so expressly set down, *1 Tim.* 3. from *v.* 1. to *v.* 8. But whereas it is objected, that seeing there is only mentioned in that Chapter a twofold Order, 1. Of Bishops, 2. Of Deacons, it would seem, that Presbyters are there understood by Bishops, otherwise Presbyters should be wholly excluded from Church Government.

I answer, that will not follow, 1. Because Presbyters, though not expressed, yet may be understood, and implied, under either the one or the other expressly mentioned; the name Deacon being sometimes a general Name in Scripture, signifying the most superiour, as well as inferior Officers in the Church, *1 Cor.* 3. 5. *St. Paul* called himself and *Apollo* by the Name of Deacons, as it is in the Greek; and *2 Cor.* 3. 6. he calls all Ministers and Teachers at large by that Name. But 2. in the order of things there were but these two Officers at first (excepting the Apostles) *Bishops*, and *Deacons*. The Churches in many places at first being small, the *Bishop* could both sufficiently teach, and rule his Flock, and so did, without Presbyters, only by the assistance of Deacons; but the number of the Flock increasing, he did chuse, and raise up those that had well used the Office of a Deacon, to the higher degree of Presbyters, which is called by *St. Paul*, *1 Tim.* 3. 13. a good degree, which they purchased to themselves, even as those that well used the Office of a Presbyter were afterwards raised up to the Office of a Bishop, as was accordingly practised in the Church, so that in priority of Nature, and also of Time, the Deacon is before the Presbyter, though in priority of Dignity, the Presbyter is before the Deacon. Hence according to the Order established in the Church, none is to be ordained a Presbyter, until he first be ordained a Deacon; nor can he at one and the same time, be Ordained to be both.

The Distinction and Superiority of Bishops over Presbyters or Elders, is very clear to me, as well as to many, out of St. Paul's Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 3. I. St. Paul writes to *Timothy*, to Command, or give in Charge to some that were Teachers at *Ephesus*, to teach no other Doctrine, than the pure Doctrine of the Gospel, such as he had heard of him. And had not *Timothy* had a Superiority of Office above other Teachers, which were then at *Ephesus*, why did he direct both his Epistles to him only, laying down excellent rules, and method of Government for him to follow, in the exercise of his Episcopal Function, 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. with respect to several States of Persons both Male and Female!

II. Why did St. Paul give the Charge to *Timothy* to count the Elders that ruled well, (which were no doubt under him) worthy of double Honour, especially them who laboured in Word and Doctrine, but that he was able to confer that double Honour upon them; a part of which was an Honourable Maintenance, according to what follows, *ver.* 18. for the Scripture saith, *Thou shalt not muzzle the Ox that treadeth out the Corn; and the Labourer is worthy of his reward.* By this it is plain, that it belonged to *Timothy*, being the Bishop of *Ephesus*, (as he is expressly called the First Bishop of *Ephesus*, at the end of the second Epistle to him) to whom the Church Treasure, (made up of Gifts of the People) was entrusted, to provide for the Presbyters under him, a necessary Maintenance, which manner of practice continued in the Church, the Bishops having the dispose of the Churches Treasure, within their several Precincts, during all that time the Church had no Christian Magistrate to Countenance her, and long after.

III. He writes to him as an Ecclesiastick Ruler and Judge, that had power to hear and examine Accusations brought against Presbyters, and accordingly to judge, after due Evidence of two or three Witnesses; which plainly shews his Power of Jurisdiction over Presbyters, 1 *Tim.* 5. 19.

IV. He gives him a most solemn Charge before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Elect Angels, that in the exercise of the Power of Judicatory, he act impartially, without Favour, or bias of Affection, not preferring one before another, *ver.* 21.

V. He writes to him, as one having Power of Ordination, to Ordain Elders by laying on of Hands; and cautions him, to lay hands suddenly on no Man, *ver.* 22.

VI. He writes to him in his second Epistle, to stir up the gift of God that was in him by the putting on of his Hands, together with the Hands of the Presbytery or Eldership, *viz.* some other Apostles that might jointly with St. Paul, lay Hands on him, 1 *Tim.* 4. 14. for that the Presbytery

bytery here mentioned was a Colledge only of Presbyters, is a bare alledgment, viz. when he ordained him the first Bishop of *Ephesus*, as appears from the end of the second Epistle, 2 *Tim.* 1. 6.

VII. He willett him, that he commit to faithful Men who shall be able to teach others also, those Things that he had heard of him, among many Witnesses, which behoved to be some peculiar Things relating in great part to Rules of Discipline and Church Government, which were not fit either for Heathens to hear, or Novices in the Faith, who yet might hear the common Doctrines of the *Christian Faith*, preached in the *Christian Assemblies*.

VIII. Writing to *Titus*, he presupposeth him Bishop of the *Cretians*, as appears from the end of the Epistle to him, and tells him why he left him in *Crete*, *That he should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City as he had appointed him.* I know no reason why these should be thought *Lay-Elders*, i. e. such as were not to Preach, I find none such, either here or any where else in the New Testament. How could *Titus* exercise this Authority in such a spacious Island, where many Cities were, and Christian Congregations set up, if he had been only a single Presbyter? And if the other Presbyters had equal Power with him, why did not he write to him and them jointly? Whether in the Ordination of Presbyters, others jointly did not lay on Hands with the Bishop, is not the present question; but whether it is to be found in Scripture or Church History, that any Number or Colledge of Presbyters, Ordained any without a Bishop presiding over them?

IX. He telleth him, that the Mouths of such Teachers as were unruly and vain Talkers, and Deceivers, and who taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre sake, must be stopped; which plainly shews his Authority to depose and silence false Teachers, as well as to Ordain Sound and Worthy.

X. He telleth him of his Authority to judge, who is a Heretick, and how after the first and second Admonition, (if he amend not) he ought to reject him.

By these Instances plainly collected out of the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, it may I think appear, to all Impartial persons that well and duly consider them, that both *Timothy* and *Titus* were Bishops, and had a Superiority of Power and Jurisdiction over the Presbyters in the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete*, as well as of Ordination.

I know *W. Pryme* hath printed a Book, which he called the *Unbishopsing of Timothy and Titus*, which I have read; but I find not that he hath either sufficiently answered the Arguments brought from Scripture, to prove that they were Bishops, or given any sufficient Arguments to the

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contrary. I have also seen another great Book of his, giving a *Historical Relation* of the evil Practises of many Bishops, all which if true, saith nothing against the Office. But I could write a great Book, [three-fold greater] giving a *Historical Relation* of many good Things, Bishops have done in the World. Many Bishops both in the early and latter Ages, have been eminently exemplary in Holiness of Life, and all *Christian Virtues*; and for divers Ages succeeding the *Apostle's Days*, were blessed and happy Instruments, to preserve the Truth and Purity of the Christian Doctrine, in the World, and the Unity and Peace of the many Churches in it, hindring Schisms, and curing them that did threaten to arise. Cutting down with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, [even the Doctrinal Word, outwardly delivered in the Holy Scriptures, as they were mightily assisted by the Holy Spirit so to do] the monstrous and vile Heresies that sprung up from time to time, oppugning the Christian Faith, wherein Almighty God blessed them with great Success, and this they did partly by their particular Writings, Treatises and Epistles, as well as Sermons, and partly by their assembling in great Numbers, in Synods and Councils, to condemn them, and that many times to the danger of their Lives, under persecuting Kings and Emperours; some whereof were Heathen, and some *Arian* and *Eutychian*.

Such who are but ordinarily well acquainted with Antiquity and Church History, cannot be ignorant that the Government of the Church from the very days of the Apostles in all the famous places of the World, where Christianity came to be planted, was by Succession, the which did lineally descend for four hundred years from the Apostles days and upwards, and in divers places, to this Age.

There are two places of Scripture in the *Old Testament*, which divers of the Fathers understood of Episcopal Government, as it was to be set up in the Church under the *New Testament*, as *Psal. 45. 16.* being a Prophecy concerning Christ's Church, and his Government in the same by Church Officers. *Instead of thy Fathers* [i. e. the Apostles, who were the Founders of the *New Testament* Church, and were her Fathers] *shall be thy Children*, [i. e. their Successors in the Government of the Church after their Decease] *whom thou maiest make Princes in all the Earth.*

The other place is in *Isaiah 60. 17.* *I will appoint them Bishops in Righteousness, and Deacons or Ministers in Faith*, as *Clemens Bishop of Rome* quotes it in his famous Epistle to the *Corinthians*, but as the *Septuagint* hath it, isthus, *And I will give thy Princes in Peace, and thy Bishops in Righteousness.*

Ignatius who conversed with *St. John* the Apostle, and as his Disciple, and Bishop of *Antioch*, being constituted by him, writeth thus to the Church of *Smyrna*, let the People be subject to their Deacons, the Deacons to the Presbyters, the Presbyters to the Bishop, and the Bishop to Christ, as he is to his Father. *Polycarp* also was constituted by *St. John*, Bishop of *Smyrna*, who both suffered Martyrdom, as Church History giveth

Habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apostolis instituti sunt Episcopi in Ecclesiis & Successores eorum usque ad nos.

account. *Irenaeus* saith, lib. 3. cap. 3 We have to remember them, who were appointed Bishops by the Apostles in the Churches, and their Successor even unto us. This *Irenaeus* was Bishop at *Lyons*, and lived within about a hundred years after *St. John*.

It is acknowledged both by ancient Writers, and later; yea by some Calvinists, and particularly by *David Pareus*, that the seven Angels of the seven Churches of *Asia*, to whom *St. John* wrote, were the seven Bishops set over those seven Churches; also it is very probable that *St. John* himself had planted all these seven Churches, and did constitute the Bishops in them.

Hierom, whom the Adversaries of Episcopacy think that he favour-eth in opposition to the Episcopal Authority, plainly granteth that the Power of Ordination is lodg'd in the Bishop, saying *quid enim facit excepta ordinatione Episcopus, quod Presbyter non faciat*, i. e. for what doth the Bishop, that the Presbyter may not, or ought not to do, except Ordination. *Epist. ad Euagrium*. And the same affirmeth, that from *Mark* the Evangelist, until *Heraclas* and *Dionisius* Bishops there, the Presbyters of *Alexandria* did name him Bishop, one among themselves elected, and placed in a higher degree, but he doth not say that they ordained him.

And both *Hierom* and *Clemens Romanus* long before him, did make a paralel betwixt the High Priests, Priests and Levites in the Jewish Church, and Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons in the New Testament Church, what *Aaron* and his Sons, and the Levites were in the Temple (saith he) the same in the Church may Bishops and Presbyters, and Deacons, challenge unto themselves. *Hier. ad Evgr.* And how universal the extent of Episcopacy was in all the Churches, and to what end it was appointed, he further declareth in that same *Epist.* it was decreed in the whole world, that one chosen out of the Presbyters should be placed above the rest, to whom all care of the Church should belong, and so the Seeds of Schism be removed.

Thus far I think I have made it appear, that in none of the Particulars abovementioned, the Dissenters have any advantage above the Church of *England*; but that what advantage there is to be found either from Scripture, or Church History, and Antiquity, lieth on her side.

